



United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service

Scoping Notice

Sage Hen Motorized Trail Proposal

Dolores Ranger District, San Juan National Forest

Montezuma County, CO

September 2019

Comments welcome

The San Juan National Forest encourages and welcomes your written, specific comments on the Sage Hen Motorized Trail Proposal.

Background

In 2018, Montezuma County, in partnership with the Montezuma County Recreation Advisory Committee requested the San Juan National Forest (SJNF) consider designation of a motorized trail on the San Juan National Forest System lands in the Sage Hen/McPhee area west of McPhee Reservoir. The project area includes lands administered by the San Juan National Forest and the Bureau of Reclamation.

A preliminary on-site review occurred in May 2019 with the Montezuma County Recreation Advisory Committee, Dolores Ranger District staff and Colorado Parks and Wildlife to discuss the trail proposal and potential points of analysis. A second field review with Montezuma County Recreation Advisory Committee, Dolores Ranger District, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and Bureau of Reclamation occurred in August 2019.

Purpose and Need for Action

Montezuma County (project proponent) has identified a need for increased motorized recreation opportunities and public access to the National Forest System lands that that would provide access to the Rim Rocker Trail, a 160-mile OHV route from Montrose, CO to Moab, UT. Access beyond the proposed Sage Hen Motorized Trail would use existing San Juan National Forest Service roads that link to Bureau of Land Management or County roads.

The proposed Sage Hen Motorized Trail would also accommodate administrative use by the Bureau of Reclamation, Dolores Water Conservancy District and the Western Area Power Administration to access the McPhee Dam complex.

Proposed Action and Preliminary Issues

The proposed action is to designate approximately 4.75 miles of new OHV (62" and narrower) motorized trail within the Sage Hen/McPhee area (see attached map) and

As a connected action, the SJNF is considering implementation of seasonal public access limitations for big game habitat management in the Sage Hen/McPhee area. The proposed limitation would close the Sage Hen area to public access from December 1 to April 30, which is the seasonal limitation for elk and mule deer critical winter range, severe winter range and winter concentration areas specified in San Juan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

Preliminary issues identified for the proposal include but are not limited to:

- Impacts to recreational uses (hiking, biking, horseback riding) in an area currently managed for non-motorized use.
- Impacts to a popular big game hunting area.
- Impacts to archaeology and the Anasazi Archaeological District.
- Cumulative impact analysis of additional OHV use on Forest Service roads and adjacent travel routes.
- Analysis of timing restrictions and season of use.

Draft design or mitigation elements include but are not limited to:

- Motorized season of use from Memorial Day to Labor Day.
- Construction of physical barriers to limit motorized travel off of the proposed trail, with materials provided in coordination with Montezuma County.

Comment process and eligibility to object

We encourage your written, substantive comments on this proposed project. This is your opportunity to provide constructive ideas that will be used to identify issues, develop alternative approaches to this proposal and formulate design features that may be incorporated into the proposed action. Substantive comments are defined to be comments that are within the scope of, and specific to, the project and have a direct relationship to the proposed action.

In order to include the option of preparing an environmental assessment and decision notice/finding of no significant impact, this scoping notice is subject to 36 CFR 218, the project-level, pre-decisional administrative review process. Because the proposed project is an activity implementing a land management plan and not authorized under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act, it is subject to 36 CFR 218 subparts A and B only.

Only individuals or organizations who submit timely and specific written comments about the proposed project during an established public comment period are eligible to file an objection. Public comment periods are established by the responsible official and include a request for comments during scoping, the 40 CFR 1506.10 comment period, or other public involvement opportunities where written comments are requested by the responsible official (36 CFR 218.5(a)).

Comments submitted by individuals or organizations must have evidence of timely submission, as defined by 36 CFR 218.25(a)(4) and meet the following requirements outlined in 36 CFR 218.25(a)(3):

Name and postal address (an email address is recommended but not required)

Title of the proposed project or activity (Sage Hen Motorized Trail Proposal)

Specific written comments as defined in 36 CFR 218.2 regarding the proposed project, along with supporting reasons

Signature or other verification of identity upon request and identification of the individual or entity who wrote the comments.

Individual members of an entity must submit their own comments to establish personal eligibility; comments received on behalf of an entity are considered as those of the entity only.

How to Reply

The Dolores Ranger District of the San Juan National Forest is requesting your written comments during this scoping period. The 30-day scoping period is from September 6, 2019 to October 7, 2019. Comments may be submitted via the project web page: use the “Comment/Object on Project” tab on the project web site:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=56766>

Written comments can also be submitted via the U.S. Postal Service to:

San Juan National Forest – Dolores Ranger District
Attention: Tom Rice
29211 Highway 184
Dolores, CO 81323

You may also hand deliver your comments to the above address during normal business hours, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays.

Comments received, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the public record. The information will be available for public inspection and will be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

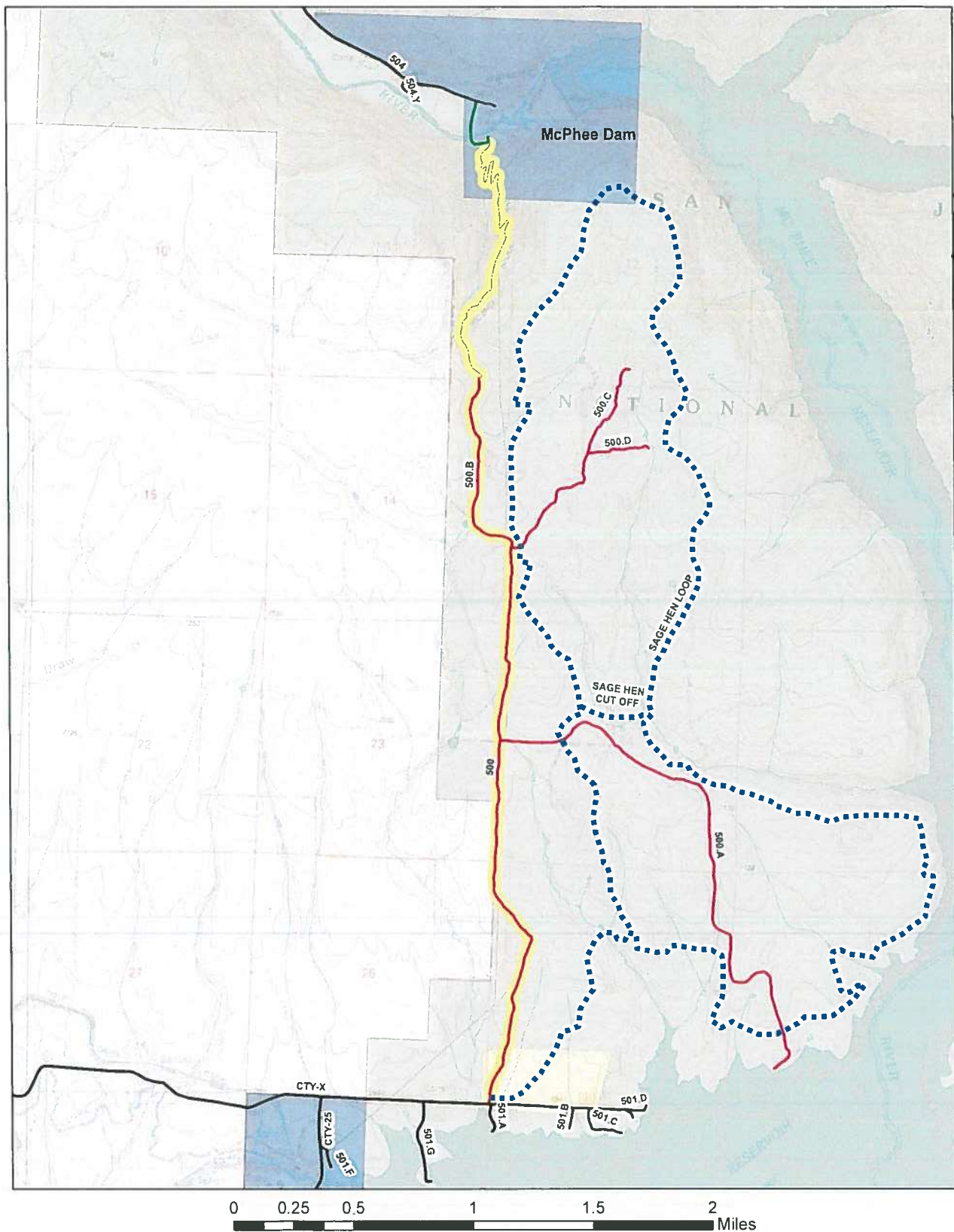
For additional information about the project, contact Tom Rice, Recreation Staff Officer, 29211 Hwy. 184, Dolores, CO 81323; telephone 970 882 6843; or email thomas.b.rice@usda.gov

Sincerely,



Derek Padilla
District Ranger

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San Juan National Forest
Dolores Ranger District

Roads

- Closed
- Open
- BOR Administered Open

Trails

- Other Trails
- - - Non Motorized Trail
- Motorized Trail Proposal

Jurisdiction

- BOR Primary Jurisdiction Zone

Surface Ownership

- BOR
- USFS
- PRIVATE

